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ABSTRACT

The highlights of a meeting of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Committee on UNICEF are contained in this report. The purposes of the meeting were to: (1) identify issues that needed further consideration in the drafts of two major documents to be presented for discussion and adoption at the World Conference on Education for All (March 1990); and (2) make suggestions and recommendations for ways NGOs can assist in the implementation of activities proposed and adopted at the World Conference. Lists of issues discussed as well as 17 recommendations are presented. Appendices include an agenda of the meeting; a list of participants; and a statement, entitled "A Call to Action," by the International Task Force on Literacy. (PCB)

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# REPORT of NGO CONSULTATION

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# EDUCATION FOR ALL: MAKING IT HAPPEN

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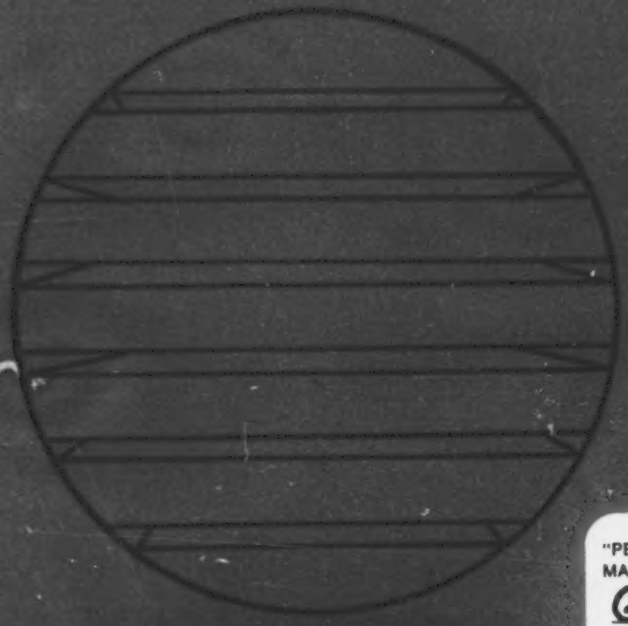

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## NGO COMMITTEE ON UNICEF

30-31 January 1990 NEW YORK, USA

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## NGO COMMITTEE ON UNICEF

| | |
|---|---|
| Robert Thomson<br>President | World Organization of<br>the Scout Movement |
| Paul McCleary<br>Deputy President | Christian Children's Fund |

## NGO WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION
## CONSULTATION PLANNING COMMITTEE

| | |
|---|---|
| Charlotte Brody | Association for Childhood<br>Education International |
| Rita S. Cooper | World Organization for Early<br>Childhood Education |
| Amelia M. Dozzi | International Social Service |
| Rosalind Harris | International Social Service |
| Brian M. Holman | International Movement ATD<br>Fourth World |
| Gordon J. Klopf (Chair) | World Organization for Early<br>Childhood Education |
| Marta Quinonez | Christian Children's Fund |
| Barbara Rollock | International Board on Books<br>for Young People |
| Rose G. Rosen | International Federation of<br>Social Workers |
| Mary Allen Sochet | perhaps...Kids Meeting Kids<br>Can Make a Difference |
| Martha Sternal | Soroptimist International of<br>the Americas |
| Daniel N. Wegener | Baha'i International Community |

The Report of the NGO Consultation was prepared by Amelia M. Dozzi. The assistance of J.Gary II in preparation of the document is acknowledged.

## FOREWORD

The NGO Committee on UNICEF, with a membership of more than 165 International Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), established a Working Group on Education in 1989, as one of its major subject groups for collective NGO activities. Representatives of NGOs on the Working Group were instrumental in planning and co-ordinating the NGO Consultation on Education For All: Making It Happen, as a preparatory meeting to the scheduled WORLD CONFERENCE on EDUCATION for ALL..MEETING BASIC LEARNING NEEDS (WCEFA), Jomtien, Thailand, 5-9 March 1990. The NGO Planning Committee wishes to thank UNICEF and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Sweden, for their contributions in making this Consultation possible. The assistance and co-operation of personnel in the UNICEF NGO Unit contributed to the successful outcome of the meeting.

The objectives of the NGO Consultation were to identify issues that needed further consideration, from the viewpoint of NGOs, in the content of the drafts of two major documents to be presented for discussion and adoption at the World Conference..the World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs; and, to make suggestions and recommendations of ways NGOs can assist in the follow-up and implementation of activities proposed and adopted at the World Conference.

This report of the Consultation was intended to highlight the main issues identified by the NGO representatives and the recommendations made by them that were immediately relevant to the work of the World Conference. It does not report on the valuable insights and information provided by all the speakers and the Working Group discussions. The main points highlighted during the course of the two-day Consultation are presented in this report.

Education for All: Making it Happen was intended to inform, stimulate and encourage a broad representation of NGOs to begin preparation of action plans that they could initiate after the World Conference. The challenge before the international NGO community is to act in support of its commitment to justice in education and ensure that Education for All is not an unreal, insurmountable objective, but a living, worthy reality of achievement for all people in the global community.

> "NGOs need skills in listening to and dialogue with people of little or no education. By starting to prepare ourselves and our organizations now for the full participation in decision making of the newly literate, for example, we will be adding an important incentive factor in the marketing equation which makes Education for ALL desirable. Every young person starting her or his educational career and every new adult learner needs to know right away that there is some point in staying with education."
>
> Robert Thomson, President,
> NGO Committee on UNICEF

PREAMBLE

I. World Conference on Education for All

> "..to meet the basic learning needs of all--to equip people with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they need to live in dignity; to continue learning to improve their own lives, and to contribute to the development of their own communities and nations."
>
> Goal of Global Initiative, WCEFA

In February 1989, a world-wide initiative to meet basic learning needs was launched by a partnership of four agencies of the United Nations system..the United Nations Development Programme(UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization(UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank. Subsequently, a global movement of preparations for a major world conference began to consolidate a world-wide consensus and commitment to work together for Education for All.

Throughout the course of the NGO Consultation, NGOs heard encouragement and support for their leading role in this initiative both as advocates for issues and as resources for programmes affecting children, women and adults. All NGOs were asked to contribute as active partners in the major world effort to redefine basic education, and to help meet the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of putting education within the reach of every child and adult.

> "Today, the big difference is the capacity to do something is here...morality must march with changing capacity... the question becomes...how do we create this new morality? Here, the NGOs play a role in the vanguard."
>
> James Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF

In preparation for the World Conference, a series of activities were concluded, which involved nine regional and three international consultations and included representatives of NGOs. Through a world-wide process of study, review, synthesis and consultation, the World Conference and its preparatory activities aimed at highlighting the importance and impact of basic education and renewal of the commitment to make it available to all; forging a global consensus and a framework for action to meet the basic learning needs of children, youth and adults; providing a forum for sharing of experiences and research results to invigorate ongoing and planned programmes.

> "Three reasons that should be driving us all to achieve success in meeting the basic learning needs of children, youth and adults in the future are: (1) basic education is important for all; (2) basic education is not presently provided for all; (3) basic education for all is attainable."
>
> Wadi D. Haddad, Executive Secretary,
> Interagency Commission, WCEFA

The two draft working documents before the World Conference, the Declaration and Framework for Action, were products of this total advisory process. Participants at the NGO Consultation were informed about changes in content of the two documents that had taken place during the drafting process. Background explanatory remarks were provided, as appropriate. In final form, when adopted, the two documents are intended to serve as useful tools to national authorities in their own identification of national capacities and programmes.

> "Innovative, creative ideas are needed.. from NGOs, from the grassroots groups. Input, advice and views can help governments define new alternatives and options... we need help with studies now to look at national capacities in the informal sectors."
>
> Sarah Timpson, Director
> NGO Division, UNDP

The critical questions that will need to be asked and answered concern how countries, NGOs and international organizations, individually and collectively, will translate the Declaration into their own policies and the Framework into their own plans and strategies.

Of particular significance was the fact that consensus emerged from the regional consultations around key elements of the two documents. These included:

* the recognition of the continium of learning from early childhood through adulthood, moving from family to the community.

* the critically important role of teachers--their training, their status and their conditions of employment were central to achieving Education for All.

* the expanded vision of Education for All to include the disparities arising from gender, geography, rural/urban forces especially on the conditions of nomadic and street children, the poor and marginalized.

* the learner as active agent and dynamic participant in the education process. Education for All should help develop the person as well as the learner.

* the need to identify the role of technology in support of basic education. The significance of application of modern information and communication methods and technology was emphasised.

* the interdependence of education, health and economic productivity. There was recognition of basic education as an instrument for achieving other social goals, such as health, environmental protection, urban and rural productivity and sense of global citizenship. Educational reforms must not be isolated from other aspects of societal changes.

* the support for new alliances, as well as strengthening of existing regional or national frameworks for co-operation.

* the support for innovation, experimentation and sharing information on "what works".

* the concern about setting unrealistic goals and timetables, under present conditions. Each country should set its own specific targets and timetable, within its own national framework.

* the recognition of the NGO community as the mobilizer of resources for Education for All and as a group charged with some responsibilities to carry out the global initiatives.

* the concern about follow-up after the World Conference, what funds would be available and what structure would be in place to enable a world community to work together in productive ways.

The negative impact of the present economic conditions on education was seen to be mediated through such factors as a reduction in public revenues for education; a reduction in household incomes and on private expenditures for children's education, especially among the poor; a postponement of formal education; and, lower morale due to falling living standards.

> "Education is one of the most sensitive and volatile areas of public policy in the Caribbean...education has been the greatest and most important single source of opportunity for upward social mobility. Good quality education is synonymous with hope for a better life for one's children compared to their parents. Limiting educational opportunity is the same as limiting hope."
>
> Errol Miller, Professor of Teacher Education, University of West Indies, Jamaica.

The Consultation noted the observation that the delivery of good quality basic education is not only related to the financial resources allottted, but also to the vital human factors of motivated students and teachers and commitment of parents and policy-makers. The delivery of quality primary education requires drive, dynamism, and purposeful participation of pupils, parents, pedogogists, planners and policy-makers. Logistical support is important, but not enough.

A major area of concern to those at the Caribbean Consultation was the little emphasis on teachers in the documents for the World Conference especially their education and training and motivation, remuneration, recognition and retention. Significantly, it was noted that primary school teachers are often the first people in education to which the disadvantaged and marginal people have access.

Viewpoints specifically addressed in the South American Regional Consultation were shared at the NGO Consultation. In general, consensus had been reached on issues related to drainage of resources from the educational sector as a result of the debt crisis and economic policies, the importance of recognition of cultural roots, and the quality, equity and efficiency of primary schools, especially the poor quality of the public school system. It was noted that about 90 per cent of the poor spend some time in the elementary school system and the poor quality education they receive is not meeting their needs.

> "The school has irreplaceable functions, but its success depends also on the cultural milieu of the family and society at large, in which it exercises its functions. What is available to the child or adult before, during and after school is as important as what happens within the school, if the person is to be competent in specific domains."
>
> Father Patricio Cariolo, Director
> Centro de Investigacion y Desarrollo de la Educacion, Chile

## II. INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR 1990

The launch of the International Literacy Year (ILY), under the auspices of UNESCO, was intended to mobilize global support to combat illiteracy throughout the world. As re-enforcement to the ILY objectives, one of the major aims of the World Conference on Education for All is to reduce adult illiteracy to 15 per cent by the year 2000.

Representatives of NGOs are active in ILY activities, primarily through their role as members of the International Task Force on Literacy. The Task Force has issued an important document - A Call To Action - to strengthen the commitments to literacy through presentation of essential organizing principles.

## III. NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN PARTNERSHIPS

> "In the World Conference, there is importance on forging partnerships, but the partnerships with NGOs must continue and be manifest in whatever follow-up mechanisms are established ...we want to know how we can work together at all levels--community, national, regional and international."
>
> Colin Power, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

The NGO Consultation in New York drew together representatives from many disciplines, with different interests in education. Individuals were assigned to Working Groups for discussion purposes and document review. Midway through the NGO Consultation programme, representatives of the four sponsoring agencies for the World Conference responded to issues raised by the NGO participants. Their input provided some guidance on the future planning strategies in support of NGO partnerships in making Education for All happen, and was beneficial to a greater understanding of the opportunities and obstacles that lie ahead.

Representatives spoke of the need for increased international funding in support of literacy and basic education activities in the 1990s; for promotion of education to develop self reliance not dependence and thus expand peoples' choices and horizons; and, for emphasis on genuine participation of all in education in order for the empowerment process to work and thus reach as many people as is possible.

> "The sweat and commitment of NGOs is today the conscience and motivation and mobilization of governments and international agencies."
>
> Richard Jolly
> Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF

Additional comments referred to the need for NGOs to share information on innovative experiences in education programmes they have tried, to propose new ideas for projects and options for implementation, and to assist in research on methods of involving people in the education process. NGOs were asked to help identify the best uses of technology in education. Several points were made on the importance of not separating the education sector from other sectors, such as health and employment, but to facilitate its integration with them, in support of striving to attain human development overall.

"Education and training are seen as a basic human need, and as activities that sustain and accelerate development. For the fact has been realized, that the qualities of a nations's people have a crucial influence on its prosperity and growth."

David Loos, The World Bank,
Special Representative to the United Nations

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

NGO participants in the Consultation supported, in principle, the elements presented in the drafts of the two WCEFA documents. It was recognized that not all the issues outlined were new and consequently each was addressed with varying degrees of complexity.

As discussions proceeded within the NGO Working Groups, the participants focused on issues which they identified as priority for further discussion and consideration during the final review of the drafts in Jomtien, Thailand. Furthermore, it was anticipated that additional discussion on these issues would contribute to the development of future plans of action for follow-up after the World Conference.

Points raised are as follows:

1. WHAT IS MEANT BY EDUCATION?

* there is a need to define terms used and to include a statement on the underlying assumptions made in the two documents.

* plans to follow-up and monitor progress of implementation of activities after the World Conference should be clearly stated in the documents, preferably within a specified time frame.

* since education is in crisis, identification of solutions now is critical before millions of people loose opportunities and are prevented from being recipients of the global initiative.

* there is a need for clarification of the difference between primary schooling and primary education.

* in defining basic education, some attention should be given to the concept of "helping persons become more human".

* there is a need to consider education of the person for survival; for life-long quality experiences; of the whole and not part of the person.

* there is a need to consider educational opportunities through intergenerational contact and structure.

2. WHAT IS THE CONCEPT OF SCHOOL?

* schools should be considered as entities to improve identities.

* schools should be open systems.

* education resources should not be drained nor diverted but protected at all levels.

* why go to school? education for what?

* motivation of the child and of the parent/adult to learn is important.

3. ROLES FOR TEACHERS AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS?

* there is a need to empower teachers and to raise the status of the profession, including the position of volunteer teachers who may have no formal qualifications.

* there is a need to support staff development and teacher training programmes.

* there is a need to allow teachers to be learners and to have the experience of learners and learning.

* there is a need to look at teacher training and the methods used and content of instruction, including the influences of the physical environment of the classroom.

* there is a need to support innovative partnerships of teachers with parents, in co-operative efforts for education.

* any definition of non-formal education should not be restrictive, but encourage diverse forms to be explored.

4. WHAT IS MEANT BY LEARNING? BY ACHIEVEMENT?

* there is a need to define what an acceptable level of learning means.

* should achievement be defined as reaching the potential? how is potential recognized?

* what is meant by success? are schools placing too strong an emphasis on success, on competing, on competition, on excellence?

* what is meant by performance or performance proficiencies?

* there is a need to place an emphasis on importance of socio-emotional learning.

* there is a need to promote concept of "learning from each other", at all levels.

* there is a need to acknowledge the influence and impact on learning of the major societal problems, such as substance abuse and human immunodeficiency virus infection; and, of the legal, psycho-social

and public health measures associated with them.

5. EDUCATION FOR WHOM?

* there is a need to ensure that Education for All programmes are accessible and/or designed specifically to reach all groups and not exclude anyone, especially the disabled, mentally impaired, gifted children / adults, children in institutions, children in prisons.

* there is a need to ensure that education is made accessible to women and girls, and that their participation in education is guaranteed.

* there is a need to ensure that education is made accessible to indigenous populations.

* there is a need to ensure that educational programmes do not exclude meeting the educational needs of men.

6. RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION?

* there is a need to recognize libraries as invaluable information resources for education, and to appropriate adequate funding for the expansion of both resources and services offered in order to reach as many people as is possible.

7. INFLUENCES OF HOME AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT?

* there is a need to perceive the home as an important contributor to basic education.

* there is a need to stress the importance of family and of the role of its various members in providing a basic education.

* the importance of education for women and girls should be strengthened in the working documents; an emphasis should be given not only to the "mother" role of women but also to their individuality and potential as leaders.

* there is a need to include reference to the important influence of the relationship of mental, physical and emotional health in learning and development; the important role of health education should be stressed.

* there is a need to consider the question of how one educates and prepares for adult living.

* there should be recognition of the important contribution of the local cultural and physical environment to education.

* there is a need to identify factors in environment that have influence on education of select groups such as the homeless, migrant labourers, rural populations, people in housing projects, people living in situations of extreme poverty.

* instruction in the language of the learner is necessary to help cognitive flow between home and school and to prevent cultural alienation.

8. ROLES FOR COMMUNICATIONS/TECHNOLOGY?

* there is a need to recognize the importance of visual literacy in education.

* there is a need to emphasise the importance of using communication skills for education.

* there is a need to encourage evaluation of messages on radio and television, for their positive and negative influences on education, and to support the development of critical skills for media review.

* there is a need to include development of skills in programme planning in communications education.

* communication techniques and models used in the health sector for educational programme outreach to varied groups should be studied for adaptation to basic education programmes.

* there is a need to identify how technology can be better understood by all and used appropriately.

* there is a need to identify how personal communication skills can be taught especially in situations where media such as radio and videotapes assume a prominent and perhaps substitute role for learning about personal communication skills.

9. WHAT SUPPORT FOR CULTURAL INFLUENCES?

* there is a need to recognize the importance of cultural influences in learning and teaching.

* there is a need to ensure that the education provided is relevant to its cultural environment.

* there is a need for teachers to support the cultural systems as they exist, for both individuals and for communities.

* there is a need to ensure all stereotyping is removed from education, not only gender, but race, age, physical health and other factors.

* there is a need to maintain sensitivity to the cultural heritage and traditions of indigenous(minority) populations in the educational process.

* there is a need to recognize the significance of oral traditions and ways to resolve conflicts,especially in peer group situations.

10.WHAT SUPPORT AT NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL LEVELS?

* there is a need to ensure that resources,financial and other,for basic education are continuously available and support the educational system infrastructure.

* there is a need for measures to be adopted which exempt educational resources from budget cuts.

* there is a need for corrective measures to be adopted to help resolve problems associated with economic recession and debt crisis,so that a negative impact will not be felt on Education for All initiatives.

* there is a need to support the concept of education as a moral right and obligation.

11.WHAT ROLES FOR NGOs?

* there is a need to encourage and support the role of NGOs in the dissemination of information about the Education for All initiative and to assist them in interpreting the recommendations of the WCEFA to local groups.

* there is a need for NGOs to expand community networks in order to obtain broader participation in Education for All initiatives.

EDUCATION FOR ALL..MAKING IT HAPPEN

> "We must not lose sight of the concept of the child as a learner,as a creative person with its own capacity to be creative,to give and to change so much in the world through its own inventiveness... we welcome the efforts to put the child at last on the education agenda."
>
> Eva Balke,International President
> World Organization for Early Childhood Education

Because a major purpose of the NGO Consultation was to identify ways NGOs could begin to actively work on plans to implement the Education for All initiatives,various suggestions were offered to help Make it Happen.

These included:

* identify ways community groups can be encouraged to study the degree of illiteracy that exists in their groups and to determine how great is the lack of education within such groups.

* assess the educational opportunities available to community members and identify who does not have the opportunity of an education.

* identify situations where women are denied educational opportunities,where no support structures exist for them to instigate changes,where opportunities for women to be leaders and have prominent roles in society are denied.

* develop networks,links,partnerships among different representative groups of NGOs,to use collective resources,to promote intercultural experiences exchange and concept of membership in a global community,to work on broader scope of actions for larger constituent groups beyond own constituencies.

* encourage NGOs to document and share information and experiences on both successes and failures of their education initiatives.

* encourage use of NGO experts,at all levels,as resource personnel in Education for All programme planning and implementation,and where applicable,in programme monitoring and evaluation.

* assess feasibility of development of an educational Journal or newsletter on basic education,which would be widely distributed.

* encourage the involvement of academic communities in research activities for basic education.

* encourage renewed and new partnerships for education with the private business sector.

* develop innovative social marketing techniques for Education for All, drawing on experiences with such programmes in the health sector.

* encourage community involvement in school programmes and activities, including support of the arts for example, music and art and drama and story-telling, as part of the basic education system. Museums, libraries, art galleries should seek to form partnerships with other institutions for education for All.

* assist with the distribution of the UNICEF, WHO AND UNESCO publication, "Facts for Life: A Communication Challenge", through NGO networks and to as many interested groups and individuals as is possible.

* encourage use of the media in the informal education system, in addition to its use as a substitute for teachers in the formal education system.

* advocate that countries collect and use national assessment data, including resources available, for integrated planning for primary education.

* continue advocacy for basic education, including through consultations with NGOs, agencies of the United Nations system, governments and donors, as part of the on-going process for advancement of the global Education for All initiatives.

* advocate allocation of funds by sponsoring agencies for follow-up activities to the World Conference, especially for meetings of NGOs and other partners at national and regional levels, to encourage information and experience sharing, as well as resources.

"We have begun to learn that it is learners, and learners who come to us that are going to make a difference for people like themselves, because they know what their feelings are, what their concerns were before they became learners, and they also know the pride with which they can achieve the goal of education."

Dame Ruth Nita Barrow, International President, International Council of Adult Education

RECOMMENDATIONS

* NGOs should be active advocates for attention to the needs of special groups so that "All" may become a reality.

* An NGO information center/clearinghouse for post-World Conference activities should be developed and supported. An assessment of existing data banks, directories, programme activities in education, research activities, and resource materials should be carried out. Sponsor agencies are encouraged to provide funding support for NGO project activities.

* An on-going plan for meetings, post-World Conference, to facilitate national/regional/international opportunities for information and resource material exchanges and sharing of project/programme experiences should be developed with involvement and contributions from NGOs at all levels, especially community and grass-roots.

* As a major follow-up activity to the World Conference, governments are encouraged, where appropriate, to establish national Councils or Committees on Education for All, with multisectoral representation of members, including NGOs.

* A process should be developed for governments to report steps taken in implementation of Articles of the Declaration and the progress achieved. The follow-up commitment must be clearly stated.

* Sponsoring agencies of the World Conference are encouraged to establish an Education Committee, with NGO representatives as active members.

* Recognition should be given by governments to alternative educational programmes developed in the private sector, and ways identified to include and support such activities in national plans and policies for Education for All.

* International financial loans to countries should be encouraged with conditions that protect and not drain the resources allocated to education and health. The intent of these conditions should be stated in the World Conference documents.

* Initiatives to document social indicators as a measurement of government commitment to the educational and health sectors are encouraged. NGOs should be invited to assist in data collection as appropriate.

* A provision for inclusive strategies and a framework that provides opportunity for individual, institution and national organizations to increase their participation and adoption of objectives over time should be advocated.

* A statement should be included in the Declaration about learning as a self-directed process and about the active role of learners.

* The definition of teacher should be expansive and not restrictive and should include parents, grandparents, religious leaders, siblings and many others. Recognition should be given to the fact that we are all teachers and learners in life.

* The reference to term "acquisition" in learning should be deleted from the Declaration(Article iv). The term implies a view of knowledge as a commodity and the learner as a passive receptor.

* Greater emphasis should be made in the Declaration and the Framework to social-emotional learning and value of self-esteem and self-respect.

* The Institute for Training and Research for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) should be included among the listing of existing major mechanisms that could be used to foster implementation action plans for basic education(Framework, II 2.#38).

* Reference to the UN Decade for Women (1975-85) should be included in the affirmation section of the Declaration, to move forward the goals and global advocacy for basic learning needs of women which can and must be met (Declaration, page 7, paragraph 3).

* The results of the World Conference should be widely shared especially with groups needing special support, such as women, disabled, mentally ill; and, with technical institutions.

"We have found that with learning people can do almost anything, at different levels and with different competencies, but they can do it".

Dame Ruth Nita Barrow

# APPENDIX A

## NGO COMMITTEE ON UNICEF

NGO Consultation

EDUCATION FOR ALL: MAKING IT HAPPEN

30-31 January 1990 — UNICEF House, New York, NY USA

Programme

Tuesday
30 January 1990

Morning

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| Registration | Labouisse Foyer - UNICEF House |
| Opening Plenary | Labouisse Hall - UNICEF HOUSE |
| Welcome | Chair:<br>Daniel Wegener<br>Baha'i International Community Representative to the United Nations; Member, International Task Force on Literacy. |
| Greetings | James P. Grant<br>Executive Director, UNICEF |
| Education for All Initiative | Wadi D. Haddad<br>Executive Secretary, Inter-Agency Commission-World Conference on Education for All |
| Meeting Basic Learning Needs | Michael Lakin<br>Deputy Executive Secretary, Inter-Agency Commission - World Conference on Education For All |
| Education - A Consumer's View | Robert Thomson<br>President, NGO Committee on UNICEF.<br>World Organization of the Scout Movement, Assistant Director of Programmes, Geneva, Switzerland |

Discussion

| | |
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| Reports from Regional Consultations | Errol L. Miller<br>Professor of Teacher Education, University of West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica<br><br>Patricio Cariolo, S.J.<br>Director, Centro de Investigacion y Desarrollo de la Educacion<br>Santiago, Chile |

Discussion

| | |
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| Directions for Working Groups | Gordon Klopf<br>Chair, NGO Working Group on Education; World Organization for Early Childhood Education Representative to the United Nations |

Afternoon

Working Groups - Session 1
UN Church Center
and UNICEF House

Individuals are assigned to working groups on a representative basis for Session I. The purpose of the discussion is to review the documents prepared for the World Conference on Education for All, to make recommendations and observations concerning them and to begin to arrive at means for NGO implementations of the possible outcomes of the Thailand meeting.

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| Reception | Labouisse Hall |

Sponsored by the NGO Committe on UNICEF and the International Task Force on Literacy.

Wednesday
31 January 1990

Morning

| | |
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| Plenary | Chair:<br>Paul McCleary, Deputy President, NGO Committee on UNICEF; Executive Director, Christian Children's Fund. |
| Outcomes from Working Groups Session I | Gordon Klopf |

| | |
|---|---|
| An International NGO Response | Eva Balke, International President, World Organization for Early Childhood Education, Oslo, Norway |
| Sponsoring Agencies Response | Colin Power<br>Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO |
| | Richard Jolly<br>Deputy Executive Director<br>UNICEF |
| | Sarah Timpson<br>Director of NGO Division<br>UNDP |
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Discussion

Working Groups - Session II

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|---|---|
| Afternoon<br>Plenary | Chair:<br>Robert Thomson |
| Synthesis of Working Groups Session II: | Rosalind Harris<br>International Social Service Representative to the United Nations. |
| "Making It Happen" | H.E. Dame Ruth Nita Barrow<br>Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations;<br>International President, International Council of Adult Education. |
| "Meeting The Challenge" | Paul McCleary |

# INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR 1990

# A CALL TO ACTION
# from
# THE INTERNATIONAL TASK FORCE ON LITERACY

## PREAMBLE

We, the members of the International Task Force on Literacy, represent a wide range of non-governmental organizations with an outreach to over 60 million people in nearly every corner of the world. We call upon ourselves, other NGOs, governments and Heads of State urgently to make effective commitments for literacy and principles which have been identified during our fifth meeting held in Suraj Kund—India in October, 1989.

## OVERVIEW

Mass illiteracy is inextricably linked with mass poverty, structural injustice and marginalisation. Therefore, people need to be empowered as learners to get access to the education and knowledge which will enable them both to assume control over their own processes of growth, and to become active, responsible participants in a systematic process of social development.

Literacy therefore includes, but goes far beyond, the basic skills of reading and writing.

Women are the key figures in the global literacy campaign, as women and girls comprise about 70 percent of illiterate peoples. After excluding them from decision-making structures through centuries of subjugation and discrimination, today there is an urgent need to utilise their wealth of insights and talents in every sphere of social, political, and economic endeavour. To answer this need, a priority should be given to the education of girls and women in all literacy programmes. This positive discrimination will, no doubt, have an uplifting influence on the quality of education as a whole.

Conditions of mass poverty and illiteracy render people rather vulnerable to the forces of terrorism, ethnic violence and other forms of social disruption. Literacy efforts can offer benefit for all both in rural and urban settings. Therefore, education of school age children deprived of schooling and members of minority groups, often living in remote areas, should become one of the objectives of all literacy planning.

Parallel education systems both reflect and further institutionalise existing disparities. Where nonformal and education system exist, linkages must offer entry points from one to the other. Each government must allocate the necessary resources to fit this restructuring of priorities. Improving existing programme efficiency and effectiveness will help release critical resources.

Literacy, as a vital component of any educational input, should not be projected as merely a means of seeking employment or facilitating consumerism. Education should be examined in the light of its contribution to the individual's holistic growth. It should be regarded as an efficient vehicle for bringing about fundamental social changes for the creation of a peaceful and just society.

Recognizing the harmful and intolerable consequences of the current situation, we declare ourselves ready to act on the vanguard of this campaign and urge the utmost support for the cause of universal education.

# ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

## 1.0 Definition of Literacy

Literacy is defined as the set of knowledge, qualities, skills, attitudes and capacities that enable individuals to preserve self esteem by assuming both control over their own growth, and by becoming active participants in a process of social change that will lead to a more peaceful, just and harmonious society.

## 2.0 Women and Literacy

Women should be the central focus of all literacy programmes. The root causes underlying the present dismal status of women's education are located in the structures of patriarchy which continue to influence attitudes and behaviour towards girls and women in many societies. This injustice based on gender is often compounded by class and economic factors and has significant implications for the nature and thrust of education policy and planning.

2.1 Programme design must begin with an understanding of the specific cultural, social and economic problems faced by women.

2.2 Women's literacy programmes must necessarily include a component for sensitization and education of men in particular, and for other members of the family and society in general. Men should be prepared to accept the egalitarian situation which will come as a result of the education of women.

2.3 Every literacy effort should foster self-confidence in women.

2.4 Teacher training and material design and development, research and evaluation, learning strategies must all address the particular needs and learning difficulties faced by women and girls.

2.5 The entire range of methodology for women's literacy should be process oriented and should consciously promote dialogue between men and women and the full understanding of their equal partnership and shared responsibilities at home and in society.

2.6 Women should be taught how to co-operate to better promote the interests of women: educating their daughters, jointly abandoning practices which are to their detriment such as dowry systems and preference for the male child, training the next generation to think differently and learning many forms of economic, social and political co-operation. As the first educators of their children, mothers can substantially determine the values of each generation.

## 3.0 Learner Involvement as Empowerment

We begin with the assumption that all peoples can find both the direction and the capacity for development within themselves. All literacy actions must further empowerment and not increase dependency. This has many concrete implications:

3.1 Literacy instruction should foster participation in social, economic and political process as part of working together for social change.

3.2 Literacy programmes should be considered an initial stage in the development of long-term efforts to support learning and social development.

3.3 Literacy actions should promote people's awareness that education is their right and simultaneously their responsibility.

3.4 Literacy efforts should be designed to involve learners in deciding the focus, content, design and thrust of literacy acquisition.

3.5 Literacy should promote recognition of the values of one's own culture and respect for the culture of others.

3.6 Content and materials need to address local conditions and issues reflecting the diversity and range of basic learning needs.

3.7 Fostering self-realization of the individual and facilitating the individual's productive involvement in society must be the objectives of the literacy work. This alone can release the flow of hitherto hidden or suppressed energies, creativity and intellect which lead to happiness and human dignity.

3.8 A positive attitude towards learning needs to be encouraged as an essential part of the struggle for social and economic change. The power of critical and constructive thinking is an indispensable instrument for community action. The learner's own conceptions of the importance of their knowledge and actions is also significant. Literacy should not be only limited to increasing consumerism or facilitating employment.

3.9 Programmes must increase people's awareness of the magnitude of the global challenges to their survival. War, the debt crisis, terrorism, growing fundamentalism, communal violence, environmental degradation, drug and prostitution rings all pose radical threats.

Therefore, literacy should promote peace and non-confrontational problem-solving and should strengthen people's understanding of the benefits of representative government and their ability to promote and safeguard their interests.

3.10 The content must facilitate the elimination of all forms of prejudice: religious, racial, national, gender, caste, and social.

3.11 The content must promote the concept and value of peace and unity while encouraging the use of consultation as a means to resolve issues both in the family and in society as a whole.

## 4.0 Resource Mobilization

All possible resources must be harnessed and mobilized—conventional and non-conventional. Voluntary community efforts for literacy can provide new models for utilizing available resources. Lobbying and pressuring for diversion of scarce resources, from armament and military expenditure into educational, social and welfare sectors is another.

## 5.0 NGO Involvement

Voluntary, non-profit groups should mobilize all their forces to become more than ever effective means in motivating people at the grassroots to offer and seek education. They should provide for different types of formal and nonformal education of deprived groups of children, youth and adults. Establishing support activities for mothers, such as child care during working and literacy class hours, should become another type of activity offered by these groups. The degree to which their initiative and ability is respected by state and political authorities will determine their effectiveness as important partners in literacy action.

## 6.0 Public Awareness

Through information and mobilization activities the public should become keenly aware of the many dimensions and purposes of literacy. Furthermore, the general public should be involved in — especially at the local level—a public debate designed to mobilize general support for all kinds of literacy intiatives.

## 7.0 Research and Evaluation

There is very little systematic data or detailed analysis of what is happening on the ground in the literacy field; the ways and conditions in which people learn, the true nature of the nexus between gender, class, poverty and literacy. Greater financial resources should be placed at the disposal of research institutions in the developing countries. Clearly, there is an urgent need for new forms of research and imaginative ways of evaluation which will involve a far greater degree of people's involvement in both processes.

# CONCLUSION

As we move into the International Literacy Year and open a Decade of Action, it is time to renew our energies, creativity and sense of determination as we join forces to make education for all a reality. We urge all committed forces to add their voice and strength to this collective resolve, believing that only through such global effort can we establish a just, equal and educated world.

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